

EVANGELICAL TRUTH
D E F E N D E D: 3

OR, A

REPLY to a LETTER,

C O N T A I N I N G

S T R I C T U R E S

O N A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT LANCASTER,

By the Rev. Mr. H O U S M A N.

IN WHICH THE PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES OF THE
GOSPEL ARE ENUMERATED AND ENFORCED.

By G E O R G E B U R D E R.

“THE TRUTH, I FEAR, IS, THAT MANY, IF NOT MOST OF
US, HAVE DWELT TOO LITTLE ON THESE DOCTRINES
IN OUR SERMONS. — WE HAVE, IN FACT, LOST MANY
OF OUR PEOPLE, BY NOT PREACHING IN A MANNER
SUFFICIENTLY EVANGELICAL.” — ABP. SECKER.

LANCASTER:

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P R E F A C E.

IN the year 1786, the Rev. Mr. Housman preached a Sermon, at LANCASTER; in which “the principal doctrines of the Gospel were enumerated, and the necessity of believing them, with a true heart, was proved and enforced,” according to the scope of his text, which was taken from Acts xx. 27. *I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* This discourse was printed, in order that they who had heard confused accounts of his preaching, might judge for themselves.

The publication of this Sermon was speedily followed by a Letter to the Author; wherein he is severely reprov'd, as a false accuser of his clerical brethren: And the important doctrines he had advanced, are represented as the singularities of Methodism.

This Letter has hitherto remained unanswered; and silence has been construed, by some, as a presumptive proof, that it is unanswerable. The truth is, that Mr. Housman, and many of his friends, thought it too weak and contemptible a performance to require or deserve a reply: but it
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was the opinion of some others, that the Letter had a tendency to deceive the unwary, and confirm the ignorant, in their most dangerous mistakes.

The author of the following pages concurs in the latter opinion; and, if asked, Why he interferes in the dispute? He answers, — That, having formerly been a Minister of the Gospel in Lancaster, he retains a sincere desire to promote its best interests; and, as the writer of the Letter has animadverted therein on a publication of his, he apprehended it his duty to reply; especially as Mr. Housman had declined the task, and as many of the friends of truth, in that place, had requested him to undertake it.

The design of this publication is to prove, that the doctrines in question are the doctrines of the Bible; — that they were so esteemed by our venerable Reformers; — and that they are now shamefully and generally deserted. If these points are proved, it will appear, that Mr. Housman is not “ a setter forth of strange doctrine,” nor a false accuser of his brethren.

COVENTRY,
FEBRUARY 26, 1788.

G. BURDER.

E V A N G E L I C A L
T R U T H D E F E N D E D, &c.

P A R T I.

THE TIME WILL COME (said the apostle Paul) WHEN MEN WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE, — AND SHALL TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH.* That time is come. The prediction is fulfilled; and a recent proof of it has been given at LANCASTER.

The Rev. Mr. Housman, in an excellent Sermon, which he preached and printed in his native town, was enabled to bear a faithful testimony to the glorious doctrines of the everlasting Gospel. He thought it also his duty to declare, that an alarming degeneracy in doctrine, as well as an unbounded licentiousness in morals, had awfully prevailed. In his Preface to the Sermon, he intimated, that practices so impure, inferred some essential defect in principle; and he ascribed the prevalence of immorality to the general ignorance of religion. — In all this, I apprehend, Mr. Housman confined himself to the words of truth and soberness.

But a certain person, (who has thought proper to conceal his name,) considered this intimation as a very

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* 2 Timothy, chap. iv. ver. 3, 4.

severe attack on the Clergy of the established Church in general; and has published a Letter, in which he sharply rebukes Mr. Housman, as a false accuser of his brethren.

Insinuations, which convey an idea of censure, must always be unpleasant to those who are immediately concerned; for who can help wincing when touched in a sore place? The charge however is by no means new; nor is Mr. Housman singular in making it. Anonymous, (for so I shall beg leave to call the author of the Letter,) complains, that it is "an old methodistical practice;" but contends, that "a reflection so severe, ought to be supported by better proofs than the bare affirmation of a young man."

Proofs of this kind would have been improper in a Sermon, and in the opinion of many are not at all necessary; for facts speak for themselves: but as they are now called for, I shall produce a few; and such as will be sufficient, I doubt not, to satisfy the candid reader. Probably they may dissatisfy Anonymous, and incline him to wish that he had still "*handled the harp and the organ*,"* rather than have taken up his pen in a cause which admits of no solid defence.

A word or two may be properly premised respecting *The good old Way*, a small tract originally addressed to the Inhabitants of LANCASTER.† Anonymous allows the

* Gen. iv. 21.

† The design of this pamphlet appears from its title, — "The good old Way; or, the Religion of our Forefathers, as expressed in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies, of the Church of England. With substantial Proofs from the Word of God. Briefly displaying, in three sections, 1. Man's ruin, occasioned by sin; 2. His recovery, effected by Christ; and 3. His gratitude, expressed by obedience." About thirty thousand of this tract have been distributed; and the author indulges an humble hope, that they have contributed, in a small degree, to spread

the author of it the honour of preceding Mr. Housman, in "instructing the people just as he has done, and on the same subjects." But, to render that instruction and those subjects contemptible, the author is invidiously held up as "a young man — of no college, — and not a member of the established Church."

With respect to youth, — it is certainly of no importance, where TRUTH is concerned, whether he, who publishes it, be old or young. Grey hairs become a crown of glory, only when found in the way of righteousness. Antiquity affords no apology for error. If Timothy preach the Gospel, *let no man despise his youth*, said *Paul the aged*.* David, the champion of Israel was a mere stripling, compared with the vaunting giant of Philistia, and therefore despicable in his eyes; but the God, whom he served, made him more than a conqueror.

"Mr. Burder was of no college;" — the expression is as illiberal as it is far-fetched. It alludes, I presume, to the title-page of Mr. Housman's Sermon; where *he* is said to be late of St. John's College, Cambridge." But Mr. Housman's academical honours have not screened him, nor his Sermon, from abuse; so that I am but in the same predicament with himself. I think very highly of human learning, and its advantages in the christian ministry; but I conceive that a man may be possessed of a moderate and useful degree

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spread the knowledge of those truths, which, though now discarded by many, and loaded with contempt, were undoubtedly the glory of the Reformation; and were not only preached by our venerable Reformers, but sealed with their blood. — A sixth and improved edition, price 1d. or 7s. per hundred, may be had of Walsley, Lancaster; Luckman, and Piercy, Coventry; and Buckland, and Matthews, London.

* 1 Tim. iv. 12.

of it, who has never been at Oxford or Cambridge: If not, what must be said of many of the Clergy, especially in the north of England, who cannot boast of an University education? Besides, if the want of such a privilege, incapacitated Mr. Burder to publish a pamphlet, consisting chiefly, of extracts from the Liturgy, &c. the same objection will certainly lie against Anonymous, whose education (if Report says true) has fitted him rather to please the ear with musical sounds than to inform the mind by theological truths.

Mr. Burder was “not a member of the established Church — a stranger in Lancaster — and a teacher of an Independent congregation.”

As to the first — I shall only say, that Mr. Burder taught the doctrines of the established Church in a dissenting chapel; and every real friend to religion, will heartily wish they may be taught every where.*

“Mr. Burder was a stranger in Lancaster.” The good Samaritan was also a stranger to the wounded Jew, whom he so kindly relieved; while the Priest and the Levite passed by without concern.

“Mr. Burder being employed in teaching his own people, could not be qualified to pronounce how the people were taught in our Church.” — He did not pronounce positively how they were taught; but he might form

* Some years ago, when Mr. Burder applied to the magistrates, assembled at the quarter-sessions, in the castle of Lancaster, to obtain a licence, as a dissenting Minister, a book was tendered him, containing those articles of the church, which a Dissenter was *then* obliged to sign. — A certain justice of the peace eagerly cried, “I hope you are not going to read the articles.” — The clerk of the peace replied, “I suppose there is no occasion, — I apprehend the gentleman knows them already.” — “Yes,” added another magistrate on the Bench, “I dare say he does, and is a better friend to them than some who wear the gown, and eat the bread of the church.”

I mention this circumstance to shew, that neither Mr. Burder nor Mr. Housman, were singular, in supposing that the doctrines of the church were neglected.

form a tolerable judgment from general report; and especially from that general and bitter contempt, under which himself — his people — and the place where he preached, lay. Had the doctrines of the Gospel been uniformly taught *in the church*, the people would never have opposed them so much *out of it*. But the Letter published against Mr. Housman's Sermon, will stand in stead of a thousand arguments, and irrefragably prove, that a Gospel so opposed, was a new and strange thing in the Church.

To proceed: — Mr. Housman is charged with making very severe reflections on his brethren, in the following passage: —

“ There *was* a time when these essentially important truths were strenuously preached in every established Church. From the glorious æra of the Reformation till a little after the Restoration, there were few pulpits from which any other were heard. A change, which rivers of tears would not be sufficient to bewail, has since taken place. A dry system of morality, which would better become a heathen rostrum than a christian pulpit, has been substituted in the place of those awful, animating truths which are written, as with a sun-beam, in every page of the Gospel of Jesus. The consequence has proved fatal. Socinianism, infidelity, and profligacy, have spread their baneful influence far and wide; in short, morality has been preached till there is little morality left.”

This is called a severe charge,* and the author a false accuser. It shall be my business to adduce such evidence,

* If Mr. Housman be reckoned severe in this intimation, what shall we think of Bishop Burnet, who says, in the conclusion of his *History of his Own Times*,
“ I say

evidence, and that from the most respectable authorities, as will, I trust, prove the charge to be *too true*; and convince those, who may read this pamphlet, how much need there is to take heed what they hear.

To what purpose has Anonymous given us a long list of clergymen, who have published their sermons. Some of those writers are truly evangelical, and wrote well on particular doctrines; but will this prove, that the doctrines of the gospel have been *generally* preached as they ought? It will prove nothing to that purpose, unless it can also be proved, that the clergy in general have preached other men's sermons, and those he mentions particularly.*

Among the names referred to, (some of which are very respectable,) I find that of Archbishop Secker. I shall therefore transcribe a passage or two from him.

“ I was provoked (honestly I hope) to say so much as I have said upon this topic, upon being assured that many of the favourite pulpit-orators, in the chief towns of England, have *generally so little of Christianity in their compositions*, that it cannot appear from any thing that is said, that a minister of Jesus Christ is the speaker;

“ I say it with great regret, I have observed the clergy, in all the places through which I have travelled, Papists, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Dissenters; but of them all, our Clergy is much the most remiss in their labours in private, and the least severe in their lives. — Quere. Is the matter mended since the Bishop's time?

* It is well known, and cannot be denied, that some ministers content themselves with reading other men's sermons, over and over again, all their lives; so that in some places, intelligent and retentive hearers have known what sermon to expect before they went to church. To indulge this abominable laziness, manuscript sermons (often compiled by lawyers' clerks) are frequently advertised; and, to complete the disgrace, Dr. Trusler, “ *grand caterer and dry-nurse of the church*,” has provided sets of Sermons for the whole year, printed with his own letter, in Scrip, resembling writing, in order to cheat the gallery critics. Can it be wondered at, if the diligent, laborious, and faithful part of the clergy, should share in the contempt which such practices procure from the people!

speaker; and the greatest character of a modern polite preacher is, that he *entertains* very well; that is, he harangues without any assistance from his Bible: — As this vanity *threatens the destruction of this church*, as it formerly did, not without effect, that of Corinth, I thought it not improper to publish such a cautionary dehortation from this silly and wicked pride and apostasy, in hopes it may check the growth of this unbecoming, pernicious practice.”

The same author, alluding, it is supposed, to the Methodists, says, “ It is not rendering to them railing for railing; it is not ridiculing them, especially in terms bordering on profaneness, or affecting more gravely to hold them in contempt; it is not doing them the honour of miscalling other persons of more than ordinary seriousness by their name, that will prevent the continuance of the increase of the harm, which they are doing.* The only way is, for the clergy to imitate and emulate what is good in them, avoiding what is bad: to attend their cures, edify their parishioners with *awakening*,† but rational and scriptural, discourses; converse much with them, as *watch-men for their souls*; be sober, grave, temperate, and shew themselves in all things patterns of good works. — — — But then, to improve them effectually to their future happiness, as well

* Was not this a slip of his Grace's pen? Could he seriously think, that it was doing harm to revive, maintain, and promote, those evangelical truths, which he blames the clergy for neglecting? However, we trust that the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of Souls will forgive them this wrong.

† One reason that the churches are so much deserted is, that they are become a kind of holy dormitories, as one calls them. And this gave occasion to the author of a play, called *the Orators*, to compare certain preachers to *rockers*, whose sleep-compelling powers may be experimentally felt in many churches and chapels, during the hours of eleven and two of a Sunday. — See CHINESE FRAGMENT, page 46.

well as to silence false accusers; you must be assiduous in teaching the principles, not only of virtue and natural religion, but of THE GOSPEL, not as *almost explained away* by modern refiners, but as *the truth is in Jesus*; as it is taught by the church of which you are members; as you have engaged, by your subscriptions and declarations, that you will teach it yourselves. You must preach to them faith in the ever-blessed Trinity; and vindicate, when it is requisite, those parts of our creed and offices which relate to that article, from the very unjust imputations of absurdity and uncharitableness, which have been cast upon them. You must set forth the original corruption of our nature; our redemption, according to God's eternal purpose in Christ, by the sacrifice of the cross; our sanctification by the influences of the Divine Spirit; the insufficiency of our own good works, and the efficacy of faith to salvation."

The reader will just pause to reflect, that the doctrines maintained in Mr. Housman's Sermon, are those which the Archbishop so strenuously recommends. The following quotation will shew that Mr. Housman is not the first person who has accused his brethren of neglecting the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel.

"The truth, I fear is, that MANY, IF NOT MOST OF US, HAVE DWELT TOO LITTLE ON THESE DOCTRINES in our sermons; by no means, in general, from disbelieving or slighting them; but partly from knowing, that formerly they have been inculcated beyond their proportion, and even to the disparagement of Christian obedience; partly from *fancying* them so generally received and remembered, that little needs to be said, but on social obligations; partly again from not having
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studied theology deeply enough, to treat of them ably and beneficially : God grant it may never have been for want of *inwardly experiencing* their importance.* But whatever be the cause, the effect has been lamentable. Our people have grown less and less mindful, first of the distinguishing articles of their creed ; then, as will always be the case, of that one, which they hold in common with the heathens ; have forgot, in effect, their Creator, as well as their Redeemer and Sanctifier ; seldom or never seriously worshipping him, or thinking of the state of their souls, in relation to him ; but flattering themselves, that what they are pleased to call a moral and harmless life, though far from being either, is the one thing needful." — — —

" Here then lay your foundation : and set before your people the lamentable condition of fallen man ; the numerous actual sins by which they have made it worse ; the redemption wrought out for them by Jesus Christ ; the nature and importance of true faith in him ; their absolute need of the grace of the Divine Spirit, in order to obey his precepts. This will be addressing yourselves to them as Christian ministers ought to Christian hearers. The holy Scriptures will furnish you with matter for it abundantly. Short and plain reasonings, founded on their authority, will dart conviction into every mind ; whereas, if your doctrine and

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* It is by no means uncharitable to suppose, that men, who live in sin, as some Ministers do, are absolute strangers to that *inward experience* of which the Archbishop speaks. And I must beg leave to add, that no man, who has that inward experience, and who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, *can, or dare,* secrete the Gospel from his hearers. Silence, in this case, argues ignorance and unbelief ; for every Minister, sent by Christ, can join the apostle of the Gentiles, and say, *The love of Christ constraineth me, — yea, necessity is laid on me, and woe is mine, if I preach not the Gospel.*

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your speech be not that of their Bibles; if you contradict, or *explain away*, or *pass over in silence*, any thing taught there, they who are best contented with you, will learn little from you; and others will be offended, and quit you when they can. *We have in fact lost many of our people to sectaries, by NOT PREACHING IN A MANNER SUFFICIENTLY EVANGELICAL: And shall neither recover them from the extravagancies into which they have run, nor keep more from going over to them, but by returning to the RIGHT WAY; declaring all the counsel of God! and that principally, not in the words which men's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.*"

In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established. — I shall therefore join with the Archbishop's advice to the clergy, a similar direction from the Bishop of Exeter, in his last charge, of September 2, 1748.

"My brethren, — I beg you will rise up with me against moral preaching. We have long been attempting the reformation of the nation by discourses of this kind. — With what success? Why, none at all. On the contrary, we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. — We must change our voice; we must preach Christ, and him crucified. — Nothing but the Gospel is, nothing will be found to be, the power of God unto salvation besides. Let me therefore again and again request, may I not add, let me charge you to preach Jesus, and salvation through his name; — preach the Lord, who bought us; — preach redemption through his blood; — preach the saying of the great High-Priest, *He, who believeth, shall be saved;* — preach

—preach repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” *

Dr. John Edwards, a writer of great respectability, was conscious of the general defection from evangelical preaching, in his day, as appears from the following passage in his *Preacher*, v. i. 73. “ It is verily a fault in too many of the public teachers of our times, that their sermons are moral harangues generally; as if they were preaching at Old Rome or Athens, and their auditors were all infidels: We see the bad effects of this on more accounts than one. The constant insisting on nothing but morality hath lately inspired men’s heads with this notion, that revealed religion is of little consideration and worth; and this hath been one great occasion of Deism.

Mr. Knox, a modern and favourite author, shall bring up the rear of witnesses, and close the evidence; after which, I doubt not, most of my readers will be ready to write, on the indictment in question, “ *a true bill.*” The following passage is transcribed from his *Essays*.

“ A *general* complaint has been made, that SERMONS are become in these days merely MORAL ESSAYS. There *was* a time when a passage from Scripture, well introduced, was esteemed a flower of speech far surpassing every ornament of rhetoric. It is now avoided, as an ugly patch, that chequers with deformity the glossy contexture. A professed Christian preacher, addressing a professed Christian audience, should remember, that, however beautiful his discourse, if it is no more

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* I was directed to these very striking and important passages, by a very excellent book, intitled, *PAROCHIALIA*, (written by the Rev. Mr. Jesse, rector of Dowles); where much more to the same purpose may be found.

than a MORAL DISCOURSE, he may preach it, and they may hear it, and both continue unconverted heathens."

I have now, I think, sufficiently proved, that Mr. Housman was not singular or severe, when he intimated in the Preface to his Sermon, that a dry system of morality had been substituted in the place of Gospel doctrines. Some of the most zealous and respectable of the Clergy have long been of the same opinion; and a man must be a perfect stranger to the state of religion in this nation, who does not perceive how fast we are verging to absolute scepticism and infidelity.

P A R T II.

HAVING vindicated Mr. Housman from the charge of unjust severity against his brethren, I proceed to defend the doctrines advanced in his Sermon, from the objections contained in the Letter.

Mr. Housman, in conformity to the example of St. Paul, and agreeably to the direction of Archbishop Secker, just quoted, lays a proper foundation for the rest of his doctrines; by shewing in the first place, *the guilt and misery of man*, which he describes in the words of Scripture, and elucidates in an affecting manner; he insists on the necessity of an heart-felt and experimental knowledge of our apostacy from God, in order to our embracing, or even understanding the Gospel.

Anonymous admits the doctrine to be true, but *explains it entirely away*. He labours, in several pages,

to prove, that all this defilement of nature is totally washed away by baptism; which he does not scruple to call regeneration: And is very angry with Mr. Housman for affirming, that baptism is *not* regeneration.

I am exceedingly grieved to think, that Anonymous should take so much pains to confirm ignorant minds in one of the most fatal of all religious mistakes. Satan himself never invented a scheme, more calculated to lull mankind asleep in carnal security, than to persuade them that the GREAT CHANGE OF HEART, which is so often insisted on in Scripture, as essential to salvation, has already passed on them; though contradicted by the awful evidence of their unholy lives. I think it my bounden duty to cry aloud against this mischievous error; and to shew, that something infinitely more important than water-baptism is necessary to constitute the new creature.

It must be admitted, that the church of England, in those passages cited by Anonymous, lays a great stress on baptism; and, on a *cursory* view of them, *seems* to justify the idea I am exploding. But it is necessary to observe, that many of the passages alluded to are PRAYERS, expressing the desire of the congregation, that the child baptized, " *may be born again;* " — " *that he may receive remission of sins, by SPIRITUAL REGENERATION;* " which intimates a distinction between the outward sign and the inward grace; whereas, our author confounds them, and makes them one and the same thing.

Besides, the Church requires, before baptism be administered, that the infant faithfully promise, by his sureties, that he will renounce the Devil, and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently

obediently keep his commandments.* Now, this promise of the sponsors, is accepted in behalf of the child; and is intended to answer the purpose of that confession of sin, and profession of faith, which is required of adult persons. The Church therefore, after baptism, declares the infant regenerate, on the supposition of his possessing grace. And this more plainly appears from the Catechism, wherein the child is asked, "What is required of persons to be baptized?"

Answ. Repentance; whereby they forsake sin; and faith; whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God, &c.

Quest. Why then are infants baptized; when, by reason of their tender age, they cannot perform them?

Answ. Because they promise them both (viz. faith and repentance) by their sureties: which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.

But our Reformers were surely too well instructed in the things of God, to suppose that every baptized person was regenerate or born again, in the full and scriptural sense of the word, and become a new creature in Christ Jesus; as those are, in whom *old things are passed away, and all things become new*. Let us hear the judgment of Bishop Latimer in this matter. "*Except a man be born again, FROM ABOVE, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He must have a regeneration: And what is this regeneration? It is not to be christened in water, as these fire-brands [i. e. the Papists] would have it. How*

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* I would not be understood to approve of the practice of requiring men to promise impossibilities; for I apprehend it absolutely impossible, and exceedingly absurd, for any adult person to promise what a child shall believe or practise. Many serious members of the church of England, wisely decline such an engagement; and many other Christians apprehend the practice to be entirely unscriptural.

is it to be expounded then? St. Peter sheweth, that one place of Scripture declareth another. St. Peter saith, *And we be born again.* How? *Not by mortal seed, but by immortal.* What is this immortal seed? *By the word of the living God:* By the word of God, preached and opened. Thus cometh in our new-birth." *

Baptism is a sacramental sign of regeneration, in the same manner as the Lord's supper is a sacramental sign of the body and blood of Christ; baptism has therefore been called by some regeneration; by the same metonymical way of speaking, as bread and wine are called the body and blood of Christ; but to believe transubstantiation, is not a greater absurdity than to believe that water cleanses the soul from moral defilement.

The quotations of Anonymous, from the Fathers, are far from justifying his idea of baptism; though, by a figure of speech; they sometimes called the sign by the name of the thing signified. Justin Martyr speaks of adult persons, who dedicated themselves to God upon their conversion; — who were persuaded of Gospel truths; — who had fasted and prayed for pardon; — *then* they were baptized, and there *regenerated*, &c. that is, they received the sign; and, being believers, the seal of regeneration: they became *visibly*, what they had been really before; namely, new creatures; for, before their baptism, Justin says, they were *converted*; which is a term of similar import with *regenerated*. But this kind of expression is not properly applicable to infants, of whose faith we can have no evidence. Infants, indeed, ought to be baptized; it is highly probable, that when the apostles baptized whole households,

* Latimer's Sermons; vol. i. p. 479.

holds, children were included ; and learned men have fully shewn, that this was the practice of the immediate successors of the apostles. But the design of baptism, whether applied to infants or adults, is regularly to set apart, and devote the subject thereof, to the God of the Christian religion. It is an ordinance of *initiation* into the dispensation of Christianity: It is the formal badge, or appointed token, of becoming a disciple ; according to the true meaning of our Lord's injunction: *Go, and teach, (or, rather, DISCIPLE,) all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* " A person, baptized, is, in an *external* sense, *christianized*, or *christened*. — By this ceremony, however, he is not admitted into any *particular* church or religious society ; but set apart as a visible subject of Christ's kingdom at large. And farther, this rite by no means ascertains to the subject, SPIRITUAL and saving blessings ; he is hereby marked out, only as a child of the kingdom ; not, in the highest sense, a *child of God.*" * This scriptural idea of the subject may be illustrated by a distinction of St. Paul, which is applicable to Christians as well as Jews, and to baptism as well as circumcision. *He is not a Jew, which is outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the FLESH : But he is a Jew, which is inwardly ; and circumcision is that of the HEART, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.* † Rom. ii. 28, 29. Hence we see, that a Jew

* I am happy in an opportunity of recommending an excellent little tract, from whence I have borrowed this passage, intitled, *INFANT BAPTISM STATED AND DEFENDED*, by the Rev. John Horsey, of Northampton. — Sold by Buckland, London Price 6d.

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Jew might be circumcised in the flesh, and yet be destitute of that circumcision of the heart (which was the spirit of that rite): for God promised to his own people, that he would *circumcise their hearts, that they might know, and love, the Lord their God.* Many such promises were recorded in the Old Testament; yet Nicodemus, a very religious character, was just such a stranger to their meaning as Anonymous appears to be; and was startled when our Lord insisted on the indispensable necessity of the new birth, saying, *How can these things be?* He had no other than a *carnal* idea of this *spiritual* change; and therefore adds, *Can a man be born again when he is old, can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?* Christ's answer to him may be applied to Anonymous, — *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.* Could a man be born a-new, as Nicodemus proposed, he would be *flesh* still: — he would be the same cor-

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are not partakers also of the inward washing of the Spirit," proposes the following question: "*What is the advantage then or benefit of baptism to a common Christian?*" He answers, "The same as was the benefit of circumcision to the Jew outward. Rom. ii. 28; iii. 1, 2. There is a general grace of baptism, which all the baptized partake, as of a common favour; and that is their admission into the visible body of the church; their matriculation and outward incorporating into the number of the worshippers of God, by external communion. And so, as circumcision was not only a seal of the righteousness, which is by faith, but as an overplus, God appointed it to be like a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile: So is baptism a badge of an *outward member* of the Church; a distinction from the common route of heathen; and God thereby seals a right upon the party baptized to his ordinances, that he may use them as his privileges, and wait for an *inward blessing* by them. *Yet this is but the PORCH, the SHELL, and OUTSIDE*; all that are outwardly received into the visible church, are not spiritually ingrafted into the mystical body of Christ. Baptism always is attended upon by that *general* grace, but not always with this *special*.

The Archbishop, speaking afterwards of the use to be made of the true doctrine of baptism, says, it "confutes, 1. The Papists &c. 2. Many ignorant people amongst us, who, for want of better teaching, harbour in their minds such popish conceits, especially, that baptism doth confer grace upon all by the work done."

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rupt and degenerate creature: And were he to be washed with water a thousand times, his heart would remain the same. But he, who is born *from above*, is spiritual; his *views*, his *disposition*, and his *practice*, are spiritual. But can any mortal, in possession of his sober senses, imagine, that a change so great is effected by sprinkling a few drops of water? Will all the water in the universe enlighten the blind sinner in the knowledge of himself and of Christ? Will water soften and humble his heart? Will water quicken his conscience? Will water change the bias of his rebellious will? Will water implant new desires in his heart? Will water turn the impetuous stream of his affections? Will it cause him to love religion — to love Christ — to love his Bible? Will it make him hate his darling lusts and idols? Will it make him love prayer and the sabbath? — The conscience of every reader will put a strong negative on these questions; and the general practice of men, called Christians, will prove, that something more than baptism is necessary to make a man an “altogether Christian.”

If baptism and regeneration be the same thing,* then whatsoever is said of regeneration may be said of baptism. But will this bear the trial? The reader shall judge. The Scripture says, 1 John, v. 4. *Whatsoever is BORN OF GOD, overcometh the world*: substitute the word baptism, and it will read thus; — Whatsoever

* Mr. Housman is severely reprimanded by Anonymous, for “altering the sense of our Lord’s words, by leaving out, *and is baptized*,” from Mark xvi. 16. I answer, it is remarkable, that in the latter part of that text, our Lord himself leaves them out. The words are, *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*. He does not say, he that is not baptized shall be damned; which plainly intimates, that baptism is not necessary to salvation, as faith is. The penitent thief was saved without baptism.

ever is *baptized* overcometh the world; but is that true? Again, (ver. 18.) *Whosoever is born of God sinneth not*; (that is, freely, deliberately, habitually;) but is it true, that *whosoever is baptized* sinneth not, in that manner? Once more, *If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new*: Now, if baptism be regeneration, then it is equally true, that, if any man be baptized, he is a new creature; and old things are passed away, &c.* Would to God it were so, for then a nation might be born in a day; and Dr. Young's well-known address would be unjust:

“ Ye baptiz'd infidels !
Ye worse for mending ! wash'd to fouler stains !”

The celebrated Limborch, by a very plain and popular argument, evinces the absurdity of supposing, that baptism is regeneration. “ The great design of Christ's coming into the world was to renew and regenerate men : this is a work worthy of his own immediate hand. And yet we are told, Jesus baptized not, but his disciples. A plain evidence, that he made a distinction between baptism and regeneration. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, *I thank God, that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius*; but if baptism be regeneration, his meaning must be, I thank God that I *regenerated* none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. But is this cause of thanksgiving? Could he give thanks to God, that he had not regenerated any of them? Christ, says he, *sent me not to baptize* — but

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* See this idea amplified in Davies's Sermons, vol. ii. p. 18, &c.

can we think, Christ did not send the chief of the apostles to promote the great work of regeneration? He elsewhere calls himself their spiritual father; for, says he, *I have begotten you through the gospel*. But if baptism be the new birth, he could not have been their father, or begotten them, unless he had baptized them. From which it is evident, that St. Paul made a great difference between baptism and regeneration."

I shall only farther observe, that few, if any, discerning persons will affirm, that except a man be baptized, he cannot be saved; but every person, who believes the Scriptures, must admit the truth of our Saviour's solemn words — *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. John iii. 3.

I conclude with the forcible words of the amiable Dr. Doddridge on this very point, " Though persons are taught to speak of their state, in consequence of *baptism*, in very high, and I fear, dangerous terms; yet, when wise and good men come to explain those terms, it evidently appears, that many, of whom they are used, are so *in a state of salvation*, as to be daily obnoxious to *damnation*; so *the children of God*, as also to be *the children of the devil*; and so *inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*, as to be *children of wrath*, and on the brink of *hell*.*

Having defended the important doctrine of spiritual regeneration, let us proceed to consider that of free justification, through faith,† in the righteousness of Christ.

* Doddridge's Sermons on Regeneration, p. 3.

† I hope it will always be understood, that the advocates for justification by faith, do not mean, that faith justifies us as a work of *our own*, or as a meritorious

Christ. Luther is well known to have called this, *Articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*, — the article on which the church must stand or fall. Whoever is in the least degree acquainted with the history of the Reformation from popery, must know that the Protestants distinguished themselves particularly in their zeal for this doctrine, which they justly considered as of prime importance.

Mr. Housman, following the example of St. Paul, first insists on the extent and spirituality of the law; — displays its purity and sanction — and explains its awful denunciation against every transgressor; — *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law, to do them.* Gal. iii. 10.

Anonymous is offended with this truly scriptural representation of the law, and objects against it: First, “that it may cause weak minds *to despair* of ever doing their duty to God or man.” This is so far from being a solid objection against this view of the law, that it is one grand design of preaching it; for, saith the Scripture, *By the law is the knowledge of sin — and what things soever the law saith, — it saith, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.* Rom. iii. 19, 20. Bishop Latimer, speaking on Psalm li. 5, says, “This the holy prophet shewed, to put us in remembrance of our own wretchedness; to teach us to despair of our own holiness and righteousness, and to seek our help and comfort by that Messiah, whom God had promised to our forefathers.*

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rious act; for this would be, after all, a justification by *work*. Faith renounces all the merit of works, moral or religious; and is merely the empty hand of the poor in spirit, stretched out to receive the salvation of the Gospel.

* Latimer's Sermons, vol. i. p. 746.

Let us recollect in what manner the moral law was uttered from Mount Sinai — it was promulged with an awful voice, accompanied with most terrible thunder, lightning, and earthquake, so that Moses himself trembled exceedingly. “ To what purpose (says the excellent *Witsius*) was all this apparatus ? It was, 1. To proclaim the tremendous majesty of the Law-giver. 2. To display the nature of the law ; which, by demanding perfect obedience, and by the addition of dreadful threatnings, wonderfully strikes sinners to the heart ; and, without any mixture of gospel-grace, leads to despair ; and is to them *the ministry of death and condemnation.*” 2 Cor. iii 7, 9. Thus Paul found it in his own experience, *I was alive* (says he, Rom. vii. 9, 10.) *without the law once*, secure and satisfied with myself, not doubting of my state towards God ; being then an utter stranger to the true knowledge of the law, though well acquainted with the letter of it. *But when the commandment came* ; that is, when I understood its spirituality and extent, as reaching to the thoughts, views, and principles of my heart — when it came by the power of the Holy Spirit to my conscience, *sin revived*, I saw many things to be sin, which I never thought to be so before ; I found it had more power in me than I imagined ; it revived in my memory, and presented forgotten transgressions ; *and I died* ; all my self confidence vanished ; my legal hopes were slain ; and I fell under the sentence of the broken law, as a condemned criminal, deserving to die eternally. *And the commandment* (the holy and eternal law) *which was ordained to life* ; which was originally designed to be a covenant of life with the first man, who had power to keep it, and would

would have lived by it, if he had ; *I found to be unto death* ; I found it so far from justifying me, that, on the contrary, it bound me over to death and hell. May every reader's experience accord with that of the apostle ; then will the law be his *school-master, to lead him to Christ, that he may be justified by faith.** Gal. iii. 24.

Anonymous objects to Mr. Housman's view of the law, as inferring that no one but the holy Jesus ever lived up to the perfection of *the law*. This is an inference that will be readily admitted by all who know the law ; the Scripture asserts, that *there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good, and sinneth not*. Yet Anonymous introduces two or three persons, whom he apprehends were free from sin. King Josiah is greatly commended for his zeal, and is said, 2 Kings xxiii. 25. to have *turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, according to all the law of Moses* ; — true ; he *turned to the Lord* with vigorous

* It was the opinion of Luther, that he, who could rightly distinguish between the Law and the Gospel, was a good divine. For want of this necessary distinction, what confusion of ideas is commonly found in the minds of the people. But this distinction was carefully observed, and diligently taught, by all our Reformers. I beg leave to present the reader with an early and excellent instance of it, extracted from a Short Sketch of Evangelical Divinity [which I should be glad to see re-printed] originally written by a Scotch martyr, Mr. Patrick Hamelton, (who suffered in the year 1527,) and preserved in Mr. Fox's Martyrology.

"The Law saith, *Pay thy debt* [viz. the debt of perfect obedience to God]. The Gospel saith, *Christ hath paid it*.

"The Law saith, *Thou art a sinner ; despair, and thou shalt be damned*. The Gospel saith, *Thy sins are forgiven thee, be of good comfort ; for thou shalt be saved*.

"The Law saith, *Make amends for thy sins*. The Gospel saith, *Christ hath made it for thee*.

"The Law saith, *The Father of heaven is angry with thee*. The Gospel saith, *Christ hath pacified him with his blood*.

"The Law saith, *Where is thy righteousness, goodness, and satisfaction ?* The Gospel saith, *Christ is thy righteousness, goodness, and satisfaction*.

"The Law saith, *Thou art bound [over] to me, to the devil, and to hell*. The Gospel saith, *Christ hath delivered thee from them all*."

rous desires and endeavours to observe the whole law, as every real Christian does; but it is not said, that Josiah KEPT the whole law; and accordingly we read, that his death was occasioned by a rash and unwarrantable action, in going out to fight with Necho, king of Egypt, in which instance, *he bearkened not unto the words of Necho, from the mouth of God*, 2 Chron. xxxv. 20-24.

I am much more surprized, that *David* should be mentioned as a perfect man, whose flagrant sins, in several instances, are so humbly acknowledged by himself in Ps. li. and many other places. Expressions, of a commendatory kind, when applied to sinful mortals, must be understood in a limited sense, as those also respecting Zacharias, Elizabeth, and Paul: With regard to the latter, his own writings, after his conversion, direct us how to understand *his having been blameless, as touching the righteousness of the law*, Phil. iii. 6. He is there speaking of his *vain confidence*, arising from outward privileges, which he calls *trusting in the flesh*, v. 4. His general behaviour was moral; therefore *others* could not blame him; and his own mind and conscience were *blind*, and therefore he did not *blame himself*; but we have just shewn how differently he thought when his eyes were opened.

It is still objected to this view of the law, that it appears "more severe than the law of Moses, which allowed sacrifices of expiation and pardon of sin;" whereas Anonymous says, "to allow pardon for sins, and to exact a perfect obedience, are things inconsistent."

The law we speak of is one and the same for ever, like its glorious Author: And it is so far from being a contradiction,

contradiction, to require unfinning obedience, and allow of pardon; that, as we have already shewn, the impossibility of rendering the perfect obedience required, makes it necessary for the sinner to have recourse to Christ, whose one sacrifice of atonement was daily prefigured by the slaughtered lamb.

But I must attend to a very dangerous insinuation thrown out by Anonymous, subversive of the whole gospel of Christ, namely, that St. Paul, who takes such pains to establish the true doctrine of justification, was only contending with Jewish zealots, "who denied the necessity of faith, or of embracing the Christian religion: and others, who held it necessary to be circumcised, and to keep the law of Moses along with Christianity."

I shall expose "this vain subterfuge of interpreting the law, spoken of by Paul, to mean the ceremonial law," in the conclusive words of Mr. Venn.* "The apostle, to prevent this pernicious error, takes particular care to assert such things of the moral law as are in *no sense*, nor ever were, true of the ceremonial. Thus the law, of which St. Paul speaks, is one by which *every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*. Whereas the ceremonial never was, nor ever will be urged, to condemn us Gentiles, or to shew our guilt in any degree. Again, it is a law established by faith, whilst faith absolutely abolished the *Jewish* law. It is a law, to which the believing Romans were married: but many of them never submitted to the ceremonial one. It is a law, according to which the

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* See his admirable work, intitled, *The Complete Duty of Man*; a book which deserves the highest commendation, as it fully answers its title, and supplies the deficiencies of some other popular works of a similar name. Page 92.

man, that doth those things, shall live by them. A law, which, *if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness thereof, his uncircumcision shall be counted for circumcision.* It is a law which is *spiritual*, whereas the ceremonial consisted of carnal ordinances. There is not then, you see, one of these properties which can, with truth, be applied to the ceremonial law; therefore they must denote the nature and the end of the law of the Ten Commandments."

To lessen our regard to truths so humbling to human pride, Anonymous does not scruple to insinuate, that Peter, James, and John, wrote their Epistles after St. Paul had written his to the Romans and Galatians, in order to guard the Christians against some of his peculiar sentiments.

I know, that St. Paul was no favourite of the old Pharisees; nor is he of their successors, the modern Arminians. A certain dignitary of the church, I have been told, was once travelling with a lady, and in a conversation between them, concerning the doctrines of grace, being hard pressed by the force of texts, quoted from St. Paul, replied, with sharpness, — Madam, I tell you, it had been better for the church of God, if St. Paul had never written a line of his Epistles.

A concession of a similar kind was once made to me, by a clergyman of the same cast; who concluded the dispute, by saying, — Well, Sir, I believe St. Paul was a Calvinist;* but do you think that obliges me to be one?

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* Anonymous is very fond of representing Mr. Housman as a Calvinist, and the true doctrine of justification as a rigid notion of Calvinism. Nick-names are indeed very convenient when solid arguments are wanting; and the enemies of truth

I am grieved, when any persons, professing Christianity, endeavour to invalidate the authority of that great apostle ; surely, they must forget that he received his knowledge of the Gospel by immediate revelation from Christ. Hear his own account of it. *I certify you, brethren, That the Gospel, which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.** Gal. i. 11, 12.

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truth have never been sparing in the use of them. Such, in later ages, have been the reproachful epithets of Lollards, Huguenots, Gospellers, Puritans, and Methodists. Few names now found more contemptibly in a carnal ear than *Calvinists*. But was the doctrine of free justification, through faith in the righteousness of Christ, the invention of Calvin ? Let the Book of Martyrs determine. Was not Luther peculiarly zealous for this doctrine, as the very bulwark of the Reformation ? Let his famous Comment on the Galatians speak for him.

I beg leave to subjoin his memorable Protestation on this article.—“ I, Martin Luther, an unworthy preacher of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, thus profess, and thus believe ; that this article, **THAT FAITH ALONE, WITHOUT WORKS, CAN JUSTIFY BEFORE GOD**, shall never be overthrown, neither by the Emperor, nor by the Turk, nor by the Tartar, nor by the Persian, nor by the Pope, with all his cardinals, bishops, sacrificers, monks, nuns, kings, princes, powers of the world ; nor yet by all the devils in hell. This article shall stand fast, whether they will or no. This is the true gospel. *Jesus Christ* redeemed us from our sins, and he only. This most firm and certain truth is the voice of Scripture, though the world and all the devils rage and roar. If *Christ* alone take away our sins, we cannot do this with our works ; and as it is impossible to embrace *Christ* but by faith, it is therefore equally impossible to apprehend him by works. If then faith alone must apprehend *Christ*, before works can follow, the conclusion is irrefragable ; that faith alone apprehends him, before and without the consideration of works : And this is our justification and deliverance from sin. Then, and not till then, good works follow faith, as its necessary and inseparable fruit. This is the doctrine I teach ; and this the Holy Spirit and church of the faithful have delivered. In this will I abide. Amen.”

The adversaries of truth wish to represent the doctrines of grace as a human system, or the invention of some peculiar teacher. Hence the appellation, *Calvinists* ; for which, it seems, we are indebted to the Church of Rome. “ **CALVINISTS** : A name, given by Papists, to the Reformed, of France, Switzerland, Germany, and the Low-Countries.” — Great Hist. Dict.

* A modern Heresiarch began to undermine the distinguishing peculiarities of the gospel, by objecting to the Epistles, and particularly to the “ *inconclusive reasoning*” of the apostle Paul ; but as wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse, he has since had the effrontery to speak of the incarnate God, as a *fallible* and

If the Scriptures are of God, they must be consistent with themselves; it therefore ill becomes those, who reverence the Bible, to insinuate a disagreement among the sacred writers, especially in these days of growing infidelity.

The doctrine of salvation, through faith, is the leading truth of the Old and New Testaments, as has been abundantly shewn by writers on that subject; *for the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.* Rom. iii. 21.

The account of faith, given us by Anonymous, in a quotation from Archbishop Sharp, is so vague and contradictory, that I cannot pass by it without a remark.

We are told it is — “to become the disciples of Christ, — to yield assent to all he taught, and to give ourselves up to be obedient to all that he commanded.” Yet afterwards something more is made a part of it — to depend on the merits of his sacrifice for the remission of our sins: — Now, if the first definition be right, the latter must be wrong; in short, the whole of it is confused, and confounds, as many writers do, faith and its fruits. The true account of faith may be comprehended in a few words. — It is such a belief of the Gospel, as leads the soul to a reliance on Jesus Christ alone for salvation: but “becoming his disciples — giving up ourselves to be obedient — and consenting to be governed by his laws,” are not parts of faith at all, though

and peccable man. — It was the practice of the old *Pelagians*, and their successors in after ages, to speak contemptuously of *St. Paul*. *Bradwardin*, usually called, *The profound Doctor*, archbishop of Canterbury, about the year 1350, complains of it in the following words. “What multitudes, O Lord, at this day, join hands with *Pelagius*, in contending for Free-will, and in fighting against thy Free Grace; and against that great spiritual champion for Grace, the apostle *Paul*!” — Bradw. De Caus. Dei, in Præf

though such a disposition ever accompanies true living faith.*

According to this view of the matter, very many, who bear the Christian name, are proved to be unbelievers; for they neither understand nor believe the doctrines of the gospel; nor do they rely on Christ alone; but, at best, partly on Christ and partly on themselves: While multitudes more, evidence their want of faith, by their want of love and holy obedience. How necessary is it then for a faithful preacher, to apply, as Mr. Housman did, the various doctrines he delivers, both to believers and unbelievers.

Anonymous pleads, in the latter part of his Letter, for a mixed covenant. He seems willing that Christ should do part, and Christians the rest; and affects to laugh at a person who used to tell him, "she would have no half Saviour."† I heartily wish, Anonymous knew as much of religion as the poor woman he derides: He would

* Our Reformers speak thus of faith, in the third part of the Homily on Salvation. "The right and true Christian faith is; not only to believe that all holy Scripture, and all the foresaid articles of our faith, are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises, to be saved from everlasting damnation, by Christ."

† In the very dawn of English reformation, Dr. Barnes, in his Supplication to king Henry the Eighth, thus expressed himself. "Now we have tryed your spirits, that they be not of God, for you denye Christ. That is, you denye the very nature and propertie of Christ. You graunt the name, but you denye the vertue. You graunt, that hee descended from heaven, but you denye the profite thereof; for he descended for our health: This denye you, and yet it is your creed. You graunt, that he was borne, but you deny the purpose. You graunt, that hee is risen from death, but you denye the profite thereof; for hee rose to justifie us. You graunt, that hee is a Saviour, but you denye, that hee is alonely the Saviour. I pray you wherefore was he borne? To justifie us in *part*? — to redeem us in *part*? — to do satisfaction for *part* of our sinnes? — Say what you will, if you give not *all*, and *fulle*, and *alonely*, to one Christ, then denye you Christ."

In the very same manner our Reformers speak in the Homily of Salvation, part the second; which I concur, with Anonymous, in recommending to every reader,

would then be at no loss to know, what that "*particular ingredient*," or "*one thing*," is, the want of which spoils so many sermons; and, with respect to which, "the Methodists insinuate, that other divines are not in the secret." For *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them HIS covenant.* Psalm xxv. 14. He would then cease to wonder, how it can be, "that a man should be amiable in his disposition, and moral in his conduct; and yet, be as destitute of the experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, as the Pagans." Such were the ancient, and such are, the modern Pharisees; who, while they go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God,* do virtually frustrate the grace of God, and say, that Christ died in vain.† He would no longer blame the Ministers of the Gospel, for inviting Manassehs and Magdalens to come to Christ, while they speak severely to Pharisees; because their Lord and Master has said to the latter, *Verily, I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*‡

The idea of a mixed covenant,|| though not to be found in the Bible, is become very general in the present day. Perhaps this erroneous principle has been chiefly propagated by the New Whole Duty of Man. The author of that book takes great pains to degrade the old Whole Duty of Man, as very deficient with respect

as fully proving the truth of what he most falsely and absurdly calls, the singularities of the Methodists. "Man cannot make himself righteous by his works, neither in *part* nor in the whole; for that were the greatest arrogance and presumption that Antichrist could set up against God."

* Rom. x. iii.

† Gal. ii. 21.

‡ Matt. xxi. 23.

|| Bishop Latimer used to call this popish doctrine *mingle-mangle*; for it mingles law and gospel, and so mangles both.

spect to the *faith* of a Christian ; and promises to supply that defect. He has indeed treated of several historical truths respecting our Saviour ; but has sadly failed in describing the method of a sinner's acceptance with God. The passage I particularly refer to is this, " God did enter into a new covenant with man, by way of remedy for what was past, and could not be undone : Which, as may be fully collected from the gospel, was to this purpose : That, on condition of man's stedfast *faith*, sincere *repentance*, and PERFECT *obedience*, he should be restored, through Christ, to God's favour."

Soon after, the author brings down this condition a little lower ; and explains, or rather *contradicts*, what he had asserted, by saying, " NOT, that the condition of the gospel-covenant is a PERFECT *unsinning* obedience, but a *sincere endeavour* to obey all the commands of God, to the utmost of our power. Which commands, in their general and most proper sense, are so far from being impossible to be observed ; that, on the contrary, a man cannot easily transgress them, without a hardened conscience and deliberate choice."

It is rather an invidious task, and to some may appear an arrogant attempt, to oppose a book so generally received ; but it is a matter of conscience with me, and I dare not omit the present opportunity of shewing, that the above passage is anti-scriptural, and pregnant with errors of the first magnitude, and most mischievous tendency : For,

1. Man's salvation is not a *conditional* matter, depending on his performances, but absolutely promised, as the free gift of God. See Heb. viii. 10. *This is the covenant*

covenant that I will make, &c. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts : And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, &c.

2. Faith and repentance being the *gifts* of God, can never be properly called conditions.

3. If *perfect* obedience be a condition of salvation, then no individual can ever be saved.

4. If man could be saved by his faith, repentance, and obedience, then it is an *empty compliment*, to add, "*through Jesus Christ ;*" for then there would be no occasion for his assistance.

5. To say, (as the author does, p. 11,) that "Christ purchased this grace for us, that real repentance, and *sincere obedience*, shall be accepted, instead of innocence;" is to contradict Christ's own words, — *I am not come to destroy the law.*

6. To say, (as p. 11,) that "Nothing but a good life will entitle us to the favour of God," — is to ascribe salvation intirely to man, and not at all to Christ; and, consequently, is to frustrate the grace of God, and make the death of Christ a vain and needless thing.

7. To hinge the salvation of man on *sincere obedience*, is to render it the most uncertain thing in the world. Sincere obedience, considered as the *fruit* and evidence of faith, is certainly necessary to be insisted on. But sincere obedience, as the *condition* of salvation, is, to use a vulgar phrase, a nose of wax; which may be twisted into any form, and adapted to every face.

I shall beg leave to express my ideas of this subject more fully, in the words of Mr. Berridge.*

I. "Sincere

* Christian World Unmasked, (p. 35,) by John Berridge, A. M. Vicar of Everton, Bedfordshire; late Fellow of Clare-Hall, Cambridge.

1. " Sincere obedience is no where mentioned in the Gospel, as a *condition* of salvation. But if it were a condition, sure it would have been *expressly* mentioned ; because of its high importance. Yet the Bible is not only silent in this matter, but asserts the contrary. St. Paul declares roundly, *We are saved by grace, through faith ; not of works, lest any man should boast*, Ephes. ii. 8, 9. The reason added, *lest any man should boast*, plainly shuts out all works of sincere obedience, as a *condition*. For though these works are often small enough, yet if the condition is fulfilled by them, such is human vanity, they would afford a ground for boasting. Therefore, to dig the whole cankered root of merit up, and give all the glory of salvation unto God and the Lamb, the apostle says absolutely, *It is of grace, not of works*. Works have no share in the covenant of grace, as a condition of life ; they are only the *fruit* of salvation, freely bestowed ; and the *genuine evidence* of a true faith, which *works* by love.

2. " If, because obedience is inculcated in the covenant of grace, it is thought to be required as a condition of salvation ; and though not mentioned expressly, is certainly intended : Then I ask, what is the condition ? It is highly needful for me to know it, and to know it perfectly ; because my life depends upon it. I suppose, sincere obedience must mean something *short* of perfect. Pray, Sir, how *much short* ? Half an inch or half a mile ? Where must I draw my line, and fix my staff ! The Bible has not told me, and you cannot tell me, nor all the scribes in Christendom. So,

I am brought to a fine pass ! Here my life depends on a condition, which must be performed, and I know nothing of it, nor can know ; and yet I am ruined if I take a step too short. Oh ! Sir, if sincere obedience had been a condition of salvation, God would certainly have shewn me how much short it comes of perfect ; and have marked out the line exactly, whither I must go, and where I might stop.

3. “ Farther, you describe sincere obedience, by doing what you *can* ; and thus explain one loose expression by another full as loose. I call the expression *loose*, not merely for its loose meaning, but for its loose tendency. And here we may behold the subtilty of Satan, who blinds our eyes with such expressions as bear a *decent* countenance, and seem to have a meaning ; yet leave us wholly in the dark, or leave us at full liberty to put any soft construction on them. Yet if men were honest, they might see, that doing what they *can*, means nothing more, in plain English, than doing what they will ; and if they are tried by the rule of doing what they *can*, they must all be condemned ; because they daily do such things as they need not, and ought not ; and leave undone other things which they might do, and ought to do,

4. “ Sincere obedience, as a condition, can only terminate in perfect obedience. No middle point can be assigned, where you may stop. *No kind* of duty can be excluded, nor *any degree* of each kind. Thus you are unavoidably thrust upon a perfect law of works, and *become a debtor to do the whole law*. And if you dare not rest on a perfect obedience, unceasingly performed,
from

from the first day to the last, there is no other resting for you, but on Jesus Christ *alone*. He must be your all; and he will be your all, or nothing."

I do not think it necessary to attend to all the ill-natured reflections thrown out by Anonymous, in the latter part of his Letter. The important truths, contained in Mr. Housman's Sermon, stand uninjured by any thing that has been advanced against them. The original corruption of our hearts, once felt and experienced, will put an end to all boastings of self, in any form. A conviction of sin, wrought by the Holy Spirit, will prevent our placing a fatal dependance on any external rite. A view of our actions and our hearts, in the glass of God's most holy law, will fill us with holy shame. — cause us to renounce all our righteousnesses as filthy rags; and make us rejoice to accept, and rely on, the all-sufficient righteousness of the dear Redeemer. — While love to the friend of sinners, for this great deliverance, will sweetly and powerfully constrain us to lead a life of holiness and piety.

So important are these things, that the Minister of Christ must be excused, if, with the greatest zeal and fervour of Soul, he proclaim them, as on the house-top. I would rather say, he is inexcusable if he preach them not. Nor is he to be blamed, if he affectionately warn the people against prevailing errors; even if, in so doing, the charge of error and mistake should fall on men otherwise amiable and praise-worthy.*

I conclude

* I am not concerned, to defend, as justifiable, every expression which, in the warmth of a well-meant zeal, good men have dropped in a way of censure. As to Mr. Whitfield, Anonymous, has presented us with his humble acknowledgment of having

I conclude this attempt, to defend the glorious doctrines of the Gospel, by expressing my heart-felt desire in the words of the Litany : —

“ That it may please God, to bring into the way of truth, all such as have erred, and are deceived — That it may please him, to illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of his word : And that, both by their preaching and living, they may set it forth, and shew it accordingly.” — Amen.

having sometimes spoken improperly ; but I cannot find a single sentence in Mr. Housman's Sermon, that favours of unchristian bitterness. He laments, indeed, the change which has taken place in the general mode of preaching ; but brings no railing accusation against the Clergy. Be it observed, however, that though Mr. Whitfield acknowledged the impropriety of some harsh expressions, he never retracted his religious sentiments, or altered his opinion of unawakened and carnal ministers. In his will, made in America a few months before his death, he leaves this assurance to his friends, — “ I am more and more convinced, of the undoubted reality, and infinite importance of the grand Gospel truths, which I have from time to time delivered.”



T H E E N D.